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# Relationship between Discipline Referrals in Career and Technical Education as Compared to Core Classes

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Discipline infractions plague all schools large and small around the country. Gone are the days of spit balls and paper airplanes in the classroom. Last year in Charleston, North Carolina, The Post and Courier, November 11, 2007, reported that a seventh grader threw a lit firecracker into the boys' bathroom. Typical behavior students and teachers are exposed to on a daily basis center around respect or lack of it. Primary disrespect issues include but are not limited to talking back, name calling, excessive talking, tardiness, making strange noises, and writing notes. Teachers just want to teach; they do not want to spend instructional time disciplining students by assigning essays, assigning detentions, calling parents, and writing referrals. These become a tedious and time consuming part of the everyday middle school curriculum. Teachers do not need to be reprimanded about referral rates. Teachers are simply following school board policy as stated in the code of conduct when they write referrals. Discipline has to be maintained in order to insure safety within the classroom and discipline referrals are only written when the teacher has exhausted all other means to correct the inappropriate behavior. Why is it that some teachers never have discipline problems within the four walls of their classroom and other teachers are constantly battling discipline issues? It is questions like this that drive the search for behavior explanations and methods to reduce behavior infractions in school.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between discipline referrals in Career and Technical Education as compared to academic classes for determining factors that could be used to reduce referrals in eighth grade.

## **Research Goals**

To answer this problem, the following goals were proposed:

1. Determine the number of referrals written by Career and Technical Education and academic teachers.
2. Determine if Career and Technical Education classes provided environments and instructional strategies which reduced discipline referrals.

## **Background and Significance**

Teachers, administrators, parents and even students are overwhelmed with the disruptions in the classroom. Numerous researchers have explored the need to identify and categorize classroom disruptions. One researcher identified discipline violations and found that teacher and student concepts of disruptive violations are similar and that both agree that the attitude of and by the teacher or student can make or break the learning environment (Psunder, 2005). Another researcher identified discipline disruptions and found that not all disruptions were discipline disruptions, but were “miscalls” by the teacher and inappropriate handling of the “miscalls” resulted in a disruption (Seeman, 1994).

Additional research (Tobin & Sugai, 1996) was done to identify and compare patterns in middle school discipline. Again discipline violations were identified and categorized. This time discipline was viewed as a predictor of future behavior and found that early intervention in elementary school was needed to prevent future discipline violations.

Everyone agrees on one thing; discipline in public schools needs to be addressed. The reason why discipline in schools is out of control is a never ending question. The answers are as individual as the people to whom you direct the questions toward. Everyone from students to the superintendent has their own theory on why students disrupt instruction and violate school policy. People simply do not know what to do or where to turn for guidance when it comes to discipline, which is precisely why this research is directed at discipline through course content instead of traditional research methods which focus on infraction typing.

This study was conducted in hopes of not only identifying and categorizing the infraction but to relate the infraction to the type of courses or factors within the courses which result in the least amount of discipline disruptions by the students, thus reducing the amount of district wide student referrals. In this study the researcher compared the ratio of teacher referrals in core classes to teacher referrals in Career and Technical Education. The study took place at Plaza Middle School in Virginia Beach. Plaza Middle School was built in 1969 and is one of the oldest middle schools in Virginia Beach. It is centrally located in the heart of the Princess Anne area and also houses Virginia Beach's only Planetarium. The following information was obtained from the 2006-2007 "school report card". Students at Plaza Middle school were 51.7% female, 48.3% male, 18.4%

gifted, 2.7% limited English Proficiency, 11.9% special education and 42.5% economically disadvantaged.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of the study included the following:

- The study was conducted at Plaza Middle School in Virginia Beach, Virginia.
- The study took place during the second semester of the 2007-2008 school years.
- The study included only misconduct referrals of eighth grade students.
- The participants were enrolled in Career Skills, Teen Living, Technology Education, and Key Boarding along with the four required core classes.
- 42.5% of the students were economically disadvantaged and were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

### **Assumptions**

The following assumptions were made in this study:

- Gender difference, ethnic background, or social economic statuses were not factors in referring students to administration for discipline.
- Teachers were consistent in writing referrals for student discipline.
- All students read, understood, and signed the Virginia Beach student code of conduct form.
- There were no significant differences between the type of referrals from core teachers and Career and Technical Education teachers.

## **Procedures**

Quarterly discipline reports were obtained for the first, second and third quarters of the 2007-2008 school year. Referrals were then separated into categories according to the class the referral was written by core class or technical education class. The referrals were then grouped according to infraction types. Infraction typing will be consistent with the Virginia Beach Public School code of conduct. The data collected were then compared for frequency and types of referrals in core classes compared to Career and Technical Education classes to determine which type of class has the most behavior problems and identify any factors that can be used to reduced discipline infractions in eighth grade.

## **Definition of Terms**

The following terms were used in this study:

- Core courses: Academic courses include English, mathematics (advanced, algebra, geometry), science (physical and earth), and social studies (civics).
- Career and Technical Education courses: These include career skills, exploratory teen living 8, technology education 8, keyboarding, keyboarding applications and advanced computer solutions.
- Referrals: Mandatory documentation of student behavior and the past intervention of behavior sent to the principal.
- Discipline: The business of enforcing simple classroom rules that facilitate learning and minimize disruption (Cotton, 1990).

- Disruption: “Any disruption, which interrupts or interferes with teaching or orderly conduct of school activities” (Code of Student Conduct Virginia Beach City Public School, September 2007, p. 2).
- Code of Conduct: A document given to each student at the start of the school year. “The Code of Student Conduct outlines major categories of behavior and states disciplinary actions that may occur as a result of student misconduct” (Code of Student Conduct Virginia Beach City Public Schools, September 2007, p. 1).

### **Overview of Chapters**

The focus of the problem was to compare discipline referrals written by core teachers to discipline referrals in Career and Technical Education to determine if Career and Technical Education classes provided the environment and instructional strategies which reduced the incident of discipline referrals. To answer the research problem two goals were identified. The first goal was to determine how many referrals were written for inappropriate behavior in eighth grade and whether the referral was written by a core teacher or a Career and Technical Education teacher. The second goal was to determine through referrals if Career and Technical Education classes provided an environment and instructional strategies that reduce discipline referrals. Referrals were then categorized by infractions, analyzed and data were tabulated. The framework provided by the research goals enabled the research problem to be solved through data based-decision making.

This chapter also set limits on the research study. Limitations in this study consisted of studying students only at Plaza Middle School in Virginia Beach, Virginia, during the second semester of the 2007-2008 school years. Studying only misconduct

referrals of eighth grade students enrolled in career and technical education was another limitation. This chapter also identified and defined terms that were used throughout the study which had special meaning. Chapter I also provided the reader with background information as to why the study took place.

Chapter II provides information on related studies along with data from experts on the subject of discipline infractions and strategies used to reduce discipline disruptions. Chapter III explains in detail the methods and procedures used in data collection and tabulation. All data were then collected, analyzed, and tabulated and presented in Chapter IV. The final chapter, Chapter V, will summarize all the data and make recommendations for further use based on the data.



## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

The purpose of this chapter was to review literature related to the relationship between discipline disruptions that resulted in referrals in Career and Technical Education and core classes to identify factors that reduce referrals in eighth grade. Review of literature pertaining to specific class types proved to be nonexistent. There was however extensive literature on discipline, specifically prevention and identification of discipline types. This chapter will explore the rising problem of discipline in the public schools, review federal laws that impact discipline, cite possible causes of classroom disruptions, list types of disruptions, discuss discipline procedures, explain discipline research results, and discuss strategies implemented in schools intended to prevent or reduce discipline referrals. The chapter also describes the structure of core and career and technical education classes.

### **Discipline a Rising Problem in Public Schools**

School discipline is perceived by parents and teachers to be of extreme concern (Hymowitz, 2000). “The 16<sup>th</sup> annual gallop poll of public attitude toward public school indicated for the 15<sup>th</sup> time that discipline was seen as the number one problem in education” (McDaniel, 1986, p. 369; Chase, Kellam, Rhodes, & Sheppard, 2002). Disruption and discipline go hand-in-hand; disruption is defined as “any disruption, which interrupts or interferes with teaching or orderly conduct of school activities” (Code of Student Conduct Virginia Beach City Public School, September 2007, p. 2). Teachers more frequently are reporting minor misbehaviors which disrupt classroom instruction

and interfere with the learning of all students in the classroom. “Approximately one-half of all classroom time is taken up with activities other than instruction, and discipline problems are responsible for a significant portion of lost instructional time” (Cotton, 1990, p. 2). Public Agenda released a study called, “Teaching Interrupted”, which found that seven out of ten middle and high school teachers say their own schools have serious problems with students who disrupt classes and that many of the disruptive students should be removed from regular education (Johnson, 2004). In the past principals were able to remove students from school and send them to reform schools, but reform schools have been phased out. Federal laws gave students more rights and unintentionally stripped teachers of their right to maintain classroom discipline.

### **Laws that Impact Discipline**

Presented here is background information on laws intended to protect the rights of individuals within the educational system. In 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court sided with *Tinker v. Des Moines School District* and gave students the right to free speech (Hymowitz, 2000). *Tinker v. Des Moines* also said, “Students do not shed their Constitutional right to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate” (2000, p. 2). Does this mean students can shout out a question about algebra when the class is discussing women’s rights? Shouting out comments, questions, and answers without being called on to do so is disruptive in it self, compound this behavior with an inappropriate off task question is equally disruptive.

Then in 1975 *Goss v. Lopez* gave students the right to due process. With these laws hanging over their heads educators are prohibited from disciplining the disruptive student without fear of deprivation, a fact that the students know all too well when they

threaten to sue teachers. Eight in ten teachers have said that students are quick to remind them of their rights and that their parents can sue (Johnson, 2004).

Another law is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act which was introduced in 1975. This law mandated that schools mainstream special education students into the regular education classroom. Disruptions often increase when special needs students are integrated into the classroom (Burke, 2000). Now it seems like every disruptive student falls under the label of special education and can disrupt the education of their classmates without any repercussions. The laws that meant to protect all students have succeeded in protecting the rights of the disruptive students. Controversy over these laws still exists. Some feel these laws have failed the average students and taken away the authority of adults to discipline and guide students (Hymowitz, 2000).

### **Causes of Disruptive Behavior**

Why students disrupt classroom instruction is a baffling question. There appears to be no single cause of classroom disruption, but instead an array of reasons as individual as the students themselves. There is also an enormous difference between the student who disrupts the class once or twice and the student who consistently displayed inappropriate behavior. If a child is always disruptive there is likely a more deep-seeded undiagnosed problem (Clark, 2007).

There are two attention disorders or behavior disorders commonly overlooked until the student is in a classroom setting: Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Characteristics of children with these disorders include but are not limited to the following: gets out of his or her seat frequently without

permission, are easily distracted, often blurts out answers, often talks excessively, and often loses things or is unorganized (Burke, 2000). Misbehaviors that disrupt the educational process make teaching and learning most difficult.

Not all causes of disruption or misbehavior are medically based. The attention seeking child, commonly known as the class clown, is an excellent example. The attention seeker becomes obnoxiously loud and silly or may resort to immature acts like pushing books off a desk or trying to trip someone to get noticed (Burke, 2000). The need for such attention may stem from a lack of self esteem and attention at home.

Other frequently mentioned causes for disruptions are (Burke, 2000):

- Students are either bored or frustrated with academic materials.
- Students do not see any relevance of tasks or activities that are not motivating.
- Students may not understand when certain behaviors are permissible and when they are not.
- Teachers may send inconsistent messages about their expectations or consequences for not meeting the expectations.
- Students are experiencing personal problems and suffer emotionally from family induced stress.
- Teachers lack awareness of what is happening in the classroom at all times.

Every once in a while a child has fallen through the educational cracks and is academically misplaced. This child misbehaves to avoid looking like the “dummy” (Sprick, 1985). Regardless of the causes of the behavior it is the teacher’s job to create and maintain an environment conducive to the learning of all children.

## **Types of Disruption**

Proper identification of classroom disruption or a situation where discipline is necessary is critical to the situation. Just because a student wrote a note does not mean the class was disrupted. It is inappropriate to write notes during instructional time, but is it disrupting the class? A discipline problem is defined as: “a behavior (not merely the expression of feeling) that disrupts (or is potentially disruptive to) the learning of the rest of the class (not just the learning of the disruptor), or disrupts the sole responsibilities of the teacher (not just the personal feelings of the teacher)” (Seeman, 1994, p. 48).

Improper identification of a situation or a “miscall” can just make matters worse. To stop class and call attention to the student tapping his pencil would then break the concentration of all the students in class. A child doodling on their paper, listening quietly with his head on the desk, or leafing through a magazine are examples of disruption miscalls. Confronting the non-intrusive behavior created more of a disruption than the actual behavior. “Initial disruptions are not per se discipline problems, but by calling them that, and then acting on them as if they were, we then incite a real discipline problem” (Psunder, 2005, p. 51).

True classroom disruptions require immediate disciplinary action. These disruptions include but are not limited to the following: “talking back, talking during lectures, failing to raise hands, forgetting to bring textbooks to class, chewing gum, talking during class-several students, and name-calling” (Sprick, 1985, p. 125). To the everyday person discipline means punishment, but discipline really means to teach. Discipline is a positive way of helping and guiding children to achieve self-control (Marshall, 2001). Other behaviors that frequently caused discipline referrals were

disrespect, noncompliance, defiance, and general school disruption (Imich, 1994; McFadden, Marsh, Price, & Hwang, 1992). It was the constant display of inappropriate behavior that resulted in, what educators referred to as a discipline referral.

### **Discipline Procedures**

Across the country school systems have implemented comprehensive school wide discipline policies requiring students to know what behavior is expected, what behavior is not tolerated, and the consequences for no tolerance behavior. The school wide discipline policy also provided guidelines for teachers to adhere to when referring a student for misconduct. The Virginia Beach Public School system refers to its school wide discipline policy as the “Code of Student Conduct”. The levels of disciplinary action correspond to the number of times the offense was committed. The following level of disciplinary action is followed by Virginia Beach City Public School personnel when students violated the student code of conduct:

- Level 1 – Verbal Warning
- Level 2 – Conference
- Level 3 - Referral
- Level 4 – Suspension (In-School 1-3 Days)
- Level 5 – Suspension (Out-of-School 1-5 Days)
- Level 6 – Suspension (Out-of-School 6-10 Days)
- Level 7 – Suspension (Out-of-School Over 10 Days)
- Level 8 - Expulsion

Under the umbrella of the school wide discipline policy lays the classroom teacher's individual set of rules and guidelines which the students were responsible for understanding and following. Rules vary from classroom to classroom as the subject areas, course organization, and varying teaching styles dictate different needs (Sprick, 1985). The teacher was responsible for handling the majority of discipline within the classroom. The traditional approach to discipline is to react to the misbehavior by assigning some form of negative punishment. The level of punishment increased with the frequency and type of disruptive behavior. Assigning extra work, changing a student's seat, putting the child in time out or in an isolation area are examples of weaker consequences for misbehavior (Sprick, 1985). A harsher punishment was a behavior modification essay. Writing a behavior referral was the last resort for the teacher. Included in the referral was documentation of each and every attempt at correcting the misbehavior. The documented referral is part of the student's permanent record.

Once the referral was written the consequences for the misbehavior is out of the teacher's hands. It was common practice to have an assistant principal assigned to each grade level or an assistant principal assigned to monitor discipline school-wide. The level of disciplinary action was in accordance with the type of offense and the frequency of the offense. Typically assigned consequences were: after school administrative detention, in school suspension (ISS), or out of school suspension (OSS). Removal of the student from the classroom was the last resort for the administrator (Sprick, 1985). The more the child is out of the classroom the more instruction they miss, which has a direct impact on their grades.

## **Discipline Research Results**

Increased concern over discipline, disruption, and violence in schools led researchers to investigate and study the fore mentioned concepts. The focus was typically on discipline infraction type and the consequence for that act. One study identified five primary sources for classroom disruption: truancy, tardiness, improper attitude towards both teachers and/or students, and an improper attitude altogether (Psunder, 2005). In another study on types of discipline referrals the students were analyzed according to grade levels. Sixth, seventh, and eighth graders all received referrals for misbehavior, tardiness, and insubordination but with different degrees of frequency (Freiberg, Parker, & Stein, 1995). For every study investigating the types of disruption in the classroom which lead to a behavior referral is a counter study on the consequence for the referral.

Traditional disciplinary responses to a behavior referral were punishments such as in-school suspension or detention (Freiberg, Parker, & Stein, 1995). In the past, responses to discipline have always been reactive. School systems, administrators, and teachers have plans set up to punish the culprit but little was set up to prevent the disruptive behavior. Data suggested that punishment had little effect on reducing negative behavior (Rickert, 2005). That same data also suggested that training in non-punitive methods for dealing with behavior might reduce referrals (Ricket, 2005). Another study suggested utilizing positive preventative practices like the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support System to reduced referrals (Clark, Clonan, Davison, & McDougal, 2007).



## **Preventing Discipline Disruptions**

“Discipline without Stress” was a concept which holds the student accountable for their behavior and the teacher accountable for management of the classroom (Marshall, 2005). The teacher’s role in “Discipline without Stress” was to develop the classroom structure, procedures, and routine. Then to practice the procedures until the classroom was calm and orderly. Continual practice put the responsibility of behavior control on each student’s shoulders and forces them to own their behavior.

A classroom that promoted ownership of behavior included the components of choice, and reflection, and was positive. The teacher in the classroom is a positive person. They did not criticize or point out things the students did incorrectly instead they stressed the things they did correctly. For example, negatively phrased “Stop talking” was instead phrased like this, “This is quiet time” (Marshall, 2005). When on the verge of misbehavior the student is given choices instead of being told what to do. The theory behind choice is to provide the student ownership and empowerment in the decision making process so they learn to control disruptive impulses. Another way students learn to own their behavior is by responding to teacher directed reflective questions. Reflective questions allow the student time to think about their actions and choices. The concepts of positivity, choice, and reflection which fall under the “Discipline without Stress” concept make for a disruption free classroom.

The time educators spend dealing with disruptions can easily be spent preventing disruptions in the classroom. The Virginia Beach Public School system emphasizes Fred Jones classroom discipline strategies. Jones coined the terms “Natural” teachers. Natural teachers are proactive effective teachers who manage their class through skill and

practice. Whereas ineffective teachers are reactive. They are not consistent and react to every situation differently (Jones, 2000). Jones is an educator turned motivational speaker. His classroom management strategies for teachers are actually kits for classroom management. Through the use of humorous real life situations Fred Jones inspired teachers to incorporate his teaching strategies in their classrooms.

A classic disruption preventative strategy is mobility and proximity. Students who are close to the teacher are engaged and on their best behavior. In order for the teacher to be near all the students he or she must be mobile or free to move around the students versus sitting stationary behind a desk, a podium, or sitting on a stool. The proximity the students feel from the teacher constantly moving around and checking for off task behavior prevents minor classroom disruptions (Jones, 2002). Jones is not the only professional that suggests proximity as a preventative strategy. "Use proximity to let the students feel your presence, if you stand nearby, you can observe activities, behaviors, or remarks that might lead to an outburst" (Burke, 2000, p. 252).

Another approach to preventing classroom disruption is through the use of "positive discipline" and "school connections". "Students are more likely to succeed when they feel connected to the school. School connection is the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals" (Blum, 2005, p. 20). Classroom disruptions can be prevented through the power of positive relationships between the teacher and the student. Teachers spend a little extra time getting to know the students on a personal level; they learn each student's learning style and spend time making community connections. The teachers of the positive classroom respond to disruptions as teachable moments instead of disruptions which promoted self

discipline in the student. In the positive class the students know the teachers genuinely care about them as an individual. It is through the teacher-student connection that students learn to have faith in themselves and their abilities thus increasing academic achievement (Cope, Faircloth, Hundley, & Strahan, 2005).

No matter which discipline approach was chosen to incorporate into the classroom (Fred Jones, Positive Discipline or Discipline without Stress); its success was dependant on the teacher. The teachers' personality and their ability to create a natural rapport with the students is the key factor in preventing discipline disruptions. For example, some children love all their teachers and hate only one teacher. If the student loves or likes the teacher they perform better academically and behaviorally, where as if they hate the teacher the student instinctively displays negative behaviors and gets poor grades in their class (Seeman, 1994).

### **Course Structure**

Core classes or the required academic classes fall under the umbrella of traditional education. Concepts traditionally taught were: mathematics, science, English and history. The classroom was teacher focused and tightly controlled by the teacher. Instruction emphasized lectures, book-work, and individual written assignments. Emphasize was on memorizing facts in books and from lectures. Grading in academic classes was also traditional; students received a letter grade according to their performance on homework, tests, and quizzes along with in class written assignments.

Career and Technical Education was organized around a competency-based system. Career and Technical Education integrated academic and vocational programs

with technology to teach skills needed in the workplace (Jones, 2002). Career and Technical Education classes have a unique structure to them; they involve very few lectures. The teacher may lecture for the first 10-15 minutes of class. Upon completion of the lecture the teacher then demonstrates the procedure they just lectured. Emphasis is on the skills transferable to real-world jobs. The students then proceed to the hands-on portion of the 50 minute class. This consists of demonstrating a competency or their ability to do something at a level. Competencies are sequential; students must demonstrate a competency before they can move onto the next increasing complex competency level (Jones, 2000). Competency based education emphasizes hands-on activities, use of authentic material and equipment, group activities, teamwork, socialization and real world work place experiences. The students are free to move around and talk as long as they are focused and on task. CTE is an elective class geared toward those individuals looking for an alternative to traditional academic based education (Rojewski, 2005).

### **Summary**

Teaching is a challenging profession, as a society changes so does the educational system. It is the responsibility of the educator to stay abreast of the laws being implemented that influence their profession. While a school wide discipline policy is an important feature in the control of students, most misbehavior will be dealt with immediately by the teacher within the classroom. It is the teacher's responsibility to set up and maintain classroom expectations which minimize misconduct. Explored in the literature were several strategies for discipline prevention which would reduce behavior referrals. The research also identified traditional academic and non-traditional

competency based class structure which may aid in the education of our children.

Reduction in behavior referrals lies in the instruction of classroom expectations and the teacher's ability to consistently enforce the class rules.

Chapter III explains the methods and procedures used by the researcher. This includes descriptions of the following: research methods, the population, data collection method, and a statistical analysis.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methods and Procedures**

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the procedures used to gather data to address the problem in this descriptive study to determine whether there was a relationship between discipline referrals in Career and Technical Education as compared to core classes for determining factors that could be used to reduce referrals in eighth grade. This chapter will describe the population, instrument design, methods of data collection, and statistical analysis used.

### **Population**

In order to determine whether there was a relationship between discipline referrals in Career and Technical Education and core classes the eighth grade student population attending Plaza Middle School in Virginia Beach during the school year 2007-2008 was studied. The eighth grade population consisted of 275 students. Characteristics of the student population included: female, male, economically disadvantaged, gifted, English as a second language, and special education. Ethnic characteristics included: African Americans, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian, and unspecified. Eighteen core classes were involved in this study. These include mathematics, advanced mathematics, Algebra, Geometry, English, Advance English, Science, Earth Science, and Civics. Sixty-seven Career and Technical Education classes were involved in the study. There were thirty-three Teen Living, two Career Skills, twelve Computer Solutions, four Key Boarding, and sixteen Technology Education classes. Twenty-two instructional staff

was assigned to the core classes and four teachers were assigned to Career and Technical Education classes.

### **Instrument Design**

The design of the instrument was a three quarter or twenty-seven week discipline report. Plaza Middle School maintains an office referral data base developed from individual written office referrals. Each written referral indicates student, gender, date, referring teacher and the code of conduct violation. The type of conduct violations in Virginia Beach Public Schools are:

1. Attendance: Tardiness, truancy, excessive absences, skipping, being in an unauthorized area and leaving the classroom, building, or assigned area without permission. [S. B. Policy 5-11 and 5-17/S. B. Reg. 5-11.1 and 5-17.1/Rule 1]
2. Food/Beverages: A student will not eat in nor carry food to unauthorized areas of school. [School Handbook/Rule 2]
3. Cheating/Plagiarism: Students are expected to perform honestly through the production of their own work. [S. B. Reg. 5-34.2/Rule 3]
4. Inappropriate Property: The unauthorized possession or use of any type of electronic or mechanical device, etc., which distracts or impedes the educational process is prohibited. This includes pagers, CB radios, walkie talkies, cellular phones, laser pens, boom boxes, walkmans, gameboys, portable DVD players, Ipods, MP3 players, lighters, etc. Only high school students will have limited use of telecommunication devices, which include cell phones, pagers, walkie-talkies, etc. School officials shall take possession of the telecommunication device for twenty-four hours for any violation and parents/legal guardians/adult students must make arrangements with school officials to claim such devices. Elementary and middle school students are not permitted to possess a telecommunication device. For limited use of cell phones see S. B. Reg. 5-36.8. [Rule 4/Rule12]
5. Student Dress: A student will maintain personal attire and grooming standards that promote safety, health, and acceptable standards of social conduct. Clothing that exposes cleavage, private parts, the midriff, or undergarments, or that is otherwise sexually provocative, is prohibited. Examples of prohibited clothing include, but are not limited to: sagging or low cut pants, low cut neck lines that show cleavage, tube tops, halter tops, backless blouses or blouses with ties in the back, clothing constructed of see through materials and head coverings unless required for religious or medical purposes. All students are expected to wear dress appropriate to the occasion; extreme or ostentatious apparel or appearance is to be avoided. Any article of clothing or accessory or tattoo which advertises alcohol or an illegal substance, depicts lewd graphics, displays offensive or obscene

- language or is gang-related is forbidden. Student dress that disrupts the school environment will not be tolerated. Dress standards shall be set by the principal. [S. B. Policy 5-41/Rule 5]
6. Disruption: Any disruption, which interrupts or interferes with teaching or orderly conduct of school activities, is prohibited. Conduct, which by its nature is so extreme or offensive that it negatively impacts the school or places the student at risk either physically or educationally, will also constitute disruption. [S. B. Policy 5-2/5-38/Rule 6]
  7. Disrespectful Behavior: A student will behave in a respectful manner toward teachers/staff and other students. Examples of disrespectful behavior are: walking away, talking back, refusing to identify self properly, rude behavior, spitting, and challenging authority. [Rule 7]
  8. Insubordination: A student will obey the directions of any staff member. Examples of insubordination are: failure to comply with direction or instruction of a staff member, refusal to work in class, refusal of detention, refusal to participate in in-school alternatives, and refusal to report to in-school suspension. [Rule 8]
  9. Profanity/Obscenity: Use of language, gestures, or conduct that is vulgar, profane, obscene or abusive, or disruptive to teaching or learning, and possession of offensive materials such as nude photographs, pornographic videos, etc. [S.B. Regs. 5-36.3, C.; 5-37.1/Rule 9]
  10. Trespassing: Students, patrons, and school personnel are expected to have appropriate authorization to be on school board property. [S.B. Reg. 5-36.5 and 5-37.1/Rule 10]
  11. Unauthorized Use of Computer Technology: Any student who fails to comply with the terms of this policy or the regulation developed by the superintendent may lose system privileges, and students may be disciplined in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct or other school board policies and division regulations governing student discipline. Students may also be the subject of appropriate legal action for violation of this policy or regulation. See Acceptable Use of Computers. [S. B. Reg. 5-36.9/Rule 11]
  12. Gambling: A student will not play games of skill or chance for money or property or be present at the scene of gambling. [S. B. Reg. 5-37.1/Rule 13]
  13. Fighting: Students and school personnel are entitled to a school environment free from threat and the physical aggression of others. The following acts are prohibited: two or more parties striking each other for the purpose of causing bodily harm, threatening, incitement/instigation, physical abuse, gang activity, and bullying (repeated negative behavior that targets a specific victim.) A student who is assaulted and retaliates by hitting, kicking, or any other physical means, may be disciplined for fighting. [S. B. Reg. 5-36.1; 5-36.3; 5-37.1/Rule 14]
  14. Reckless Vehicle Use: Elementary and middle school students may not drive any motorized vehicle to or from school. Subject to availability of parking spaces, high school students who meet and follow parking and vehicle use regulations prescribed by their school may drive to school. Failure to adhere to such regulations could result in forfeiture of the parking privilege. In the case of a parking violation, a vehicle could be towed away at the operator's expense. [S. B. Policy 7-57 and 7-61/Rule 15]



15. Defacing/Destroying School or Private Property: A student will not willfully or maliciously deface, damage, or destroy property belonging to another, including school property at any time and private property while the student is under the school's jurisdiction. A student or parent/guardian will be held financially responsible, as allowed by Virginia law, for willful or malicious destruction of school property. Examples are as follows: writing on walls, mirrors, or desks; damaging another's clothing or property; and graffiti. [S. B. Policy 5-42 and Reg. 5-42.1/Rule 16]
16. Theft/Attempted Theft: A student will not possess or attempt to possess stolen property. [S. B. Reg. 5- 37.1 and 5-42.1/Rule 17]
17. Tobacco: The law requires all school buildings to be smoke free. Students are prohibited from the use and possession of tobacco products on school property. This prohibition includes all related activities (i.e., bus stops, school bus, extracurricular activities, etc.). [S. B. Reg. 5-45.2/Rule 18]
18. Medication: Students are not allowed to be in possession of medication (prescribed or over-the-counter) at any time. All medications must be taken to the clinic and will be administered by a parent/guardian or designated adult per guidelines in accordance with School Board policy. Medications needed during field trips are likewise handled through the clinic. [S. B. Regs. 5-45.1, C and 5-57.1/Rule 20]
19. Mace/Mace-like Devices: A student shall not supply, handle, use, transmit, or possess pepper gas, mace, chemical stink bomb, or similar substances on School Board property, on the way to or from school, or at school-sponsored activities. [S. B. Reg. 5-36.7/Rule 23]
20. Firearms/Look-alike Weapons: Possession of an instrument or device that resembles or looks like a pistol, revolver, or any type of weapon capable of propelling a missile is prohibited. These may include, but are not limited to, a cap pistol, water pistol, or any look-alike gun. The principal may determine if a look-alike is considered a weapon. [S. B. Reg. 5-36.4 and 5-37.1/Rule 24]
21. Weapons/Explosives/Fireworks: A student will not distribute, handle, use, transmit, or possess a weapon or any object that is designed or used to inflict bodily injury or place a person in fear of bodily injury or any object which can be reasonably considered a weapon. Students shall not possess, distribute, discharge, or participate in the discharge of fireworks or similar items. Examples of weapons and fireworks and other substances are as follows: bomb, knife/razor blade/box cutter, ammunition, fireworks, small explosives such as firecrackers, caps, poppers, and stink bombs, the use of any object or substance that will potentially cause harm, irritation, or bodily injury to students or any other person. When a laser pen is used to threaten, intimidate, or injure, it is considered a weapon. [S. B. Reg. 5-36.4/Rule 25]
22. Serious Violations: A student will not participate in any criminal acts in violation of local, state, or federal laws. [S. B. Reg. 5-37.1/Rule 27]
23. False Fire Alarms/Bomb Threats/911 Calls/Threats Against Persons/Hoaxes: Activating a fire alarm without cause, making a bomb threat, false threats, oral threats, written threats, and hoaxes (imitation infectious, biological, toxic, or radioactive substances) against students, division personnel or School Board

- property, communicating a threat in writing or electronically (including forwarding a text message containing a threat) or encouraging or soliciting any person to commit such a threat. [S. B. Reg. 5-36.2 and 5-37.1/Rule 28]
24. Sexual Offenses: A student will not engage in sexual or immoral behavior such as offensive touching, sexual harassment, indecent exposure, obscene phone calls, inappropriate sexual behavior, or acts of sexual assault or battery. [S. B. Reg. 5-44.1/Rule 26]
25. Harassment or discrimination based on race, color, sex, disability, national origin, ethnicity or religion: A student will not harass or discriminate against another person based upon that person's race, color, sex, disability, national origin, ethnicity or religion [S. B. Policy 5-7/Rule 31] (Code of Conduct Virginia Beach City Public School, September 2007, p. 2).

The data were studied to calculate the differences of numbers of referrals per core teacher and Career and Technical Education teacher. It was done to identify the code violation and frequency of the discipline violation by teachers of core classes and Career and Technical Education classes.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

In order to collect the needed data permission to access the preexisting discipline data base was granted. When a referral is made to administration a standardized coding form is filled out by the grade level administrator. The form includes a description of the discipline incident along with documentation of previous discipline issues and corrective measures taken. This information is then entered into the data base. Permission was granted by the assistant principal of Plaza Middle School to print the discipline report for the first three quarters of the 2007-2008 school years. Once the data were printed statistical analysis began. Data were analyzed by the referring teacher, the type of referral, and the number of referrals for students in the eighth grade.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Quarterly discipline reports were analyzed and tabulated by core and Career and Technical Education groups and common infraction types by number, frequency, and referral type. A t-test was performed to determine if there was a relationship between referrals in core classes as compared to Career and Technical Education classes.

### **Summary**

This chapter identified the methods and procedures used to answer the research problem. The problem was to determine whether there was a relationship between discipline referrals in Career and Technical Education as compared to core classes. The population studied was the eighth grade core and Career and Technical Education teachers and the eighth grade students at Plaza Middle School. Other information includes: variables, instrument design, methods of data collection and statistical analysis to provide methods and procedures used to collect and analyze the data for this study. In the following chapter data and findings were reported. Methods and procedures also were used for determining factors that could be used to reduce referrals in eighth grade.

## **Chapter IV**

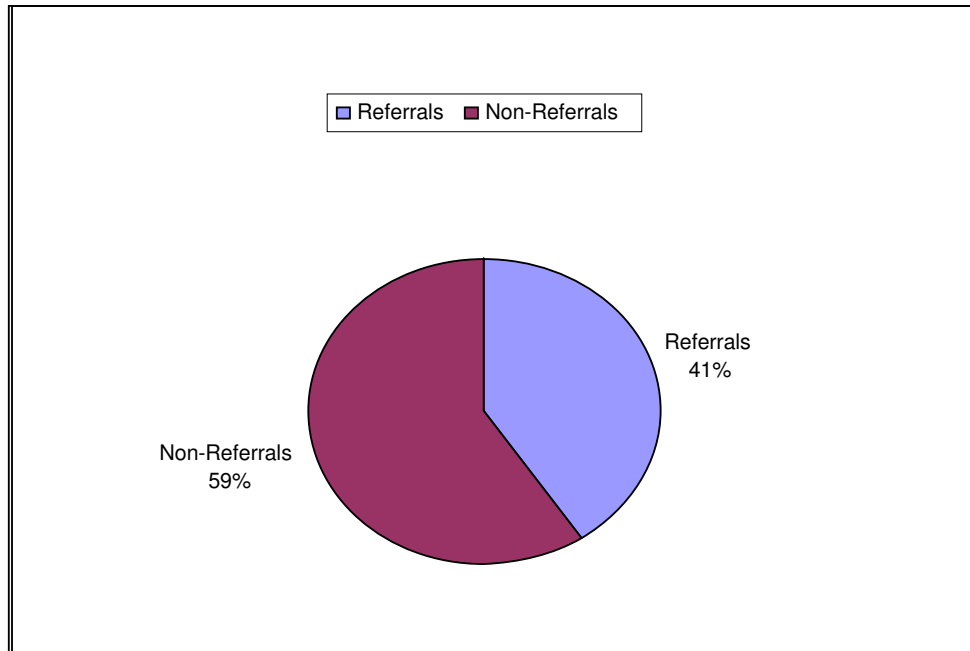
### **Findings**

This study was conducted in order to determine whether there was a relationship between discipline referrals in Career and Technical Education as compared to core academic classes. The purpose of this chapter was to present data collected both effectively and accurately.

### **Presentation of Data**

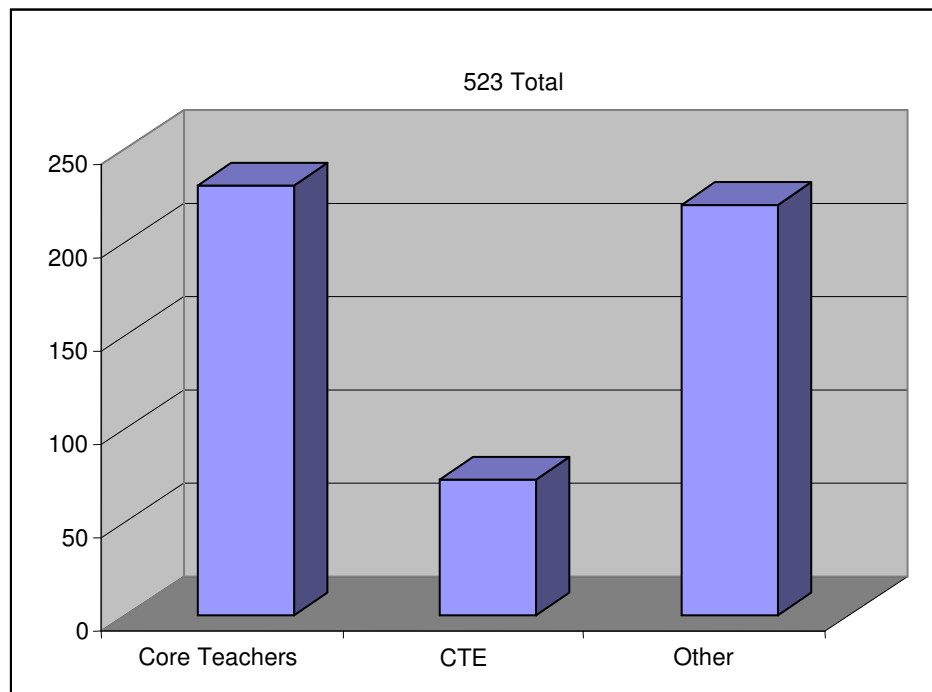
There were 275 eighth grade students involved in this study during the first three quarters of the 2007-2008 school years. Of the 275 students, 111 or 40.5% had a referral record. The 111 students had a combined total of 523 referrals on record. The mean number of referrals for all 275 eighth grade students over the three quarters was 2.5, and the mean number of referrals for the students with a referral history was 4.71. However, 164, or 59.5% of the students, had no referrals during the three quarters. See Figure 1.

Of those 111 students referred at least once, the mean number was 4.71. Referrals by the core teachers totaled 230 or 44% of the total 523 referrals. Career and Technical Education teachers made 73 referrals or 14%. The remaining 220 referrals or 42% were made by administration, security, and a category labeled other, referring to any other school personnel able to make referrals such as Librarians or computer resource specialists. See Figures 2 and 3.



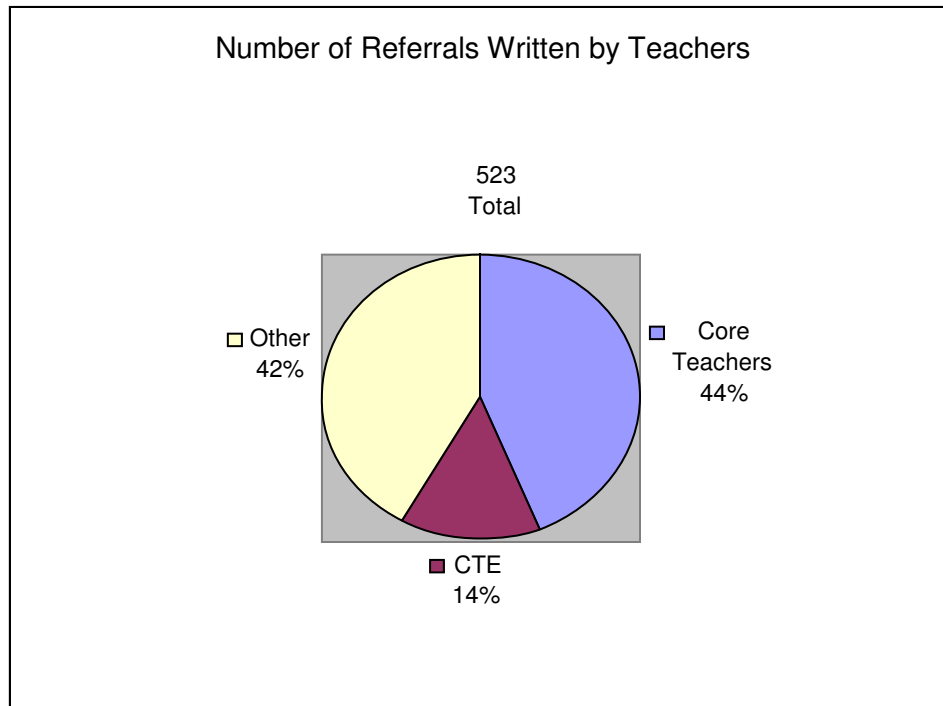
Percent of the 523 Students with Referrals

*Figure 1. Conduct Referrals*



Number of Referrals Written by Teachers

*Figure 2. Referrals by Core and CET*



Number of Referrals Written by Teachers

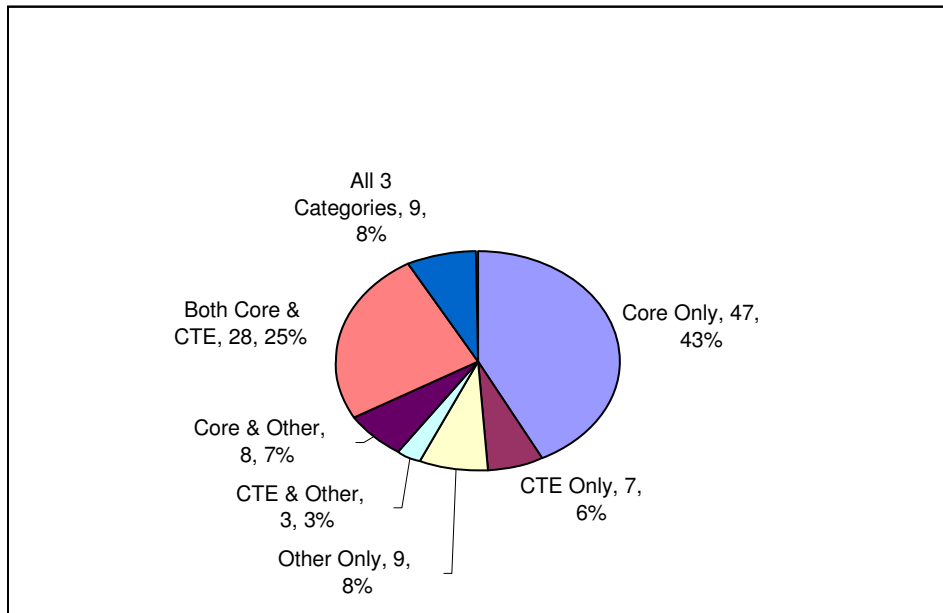
*Figure 3. Percent of Referrals Written By Teachers*

Of the 111 students with referrals, there were nine students with referrals in all three tracking categories, 28 in both core and CTE classes, eight in core and other, and three in CTE and other. Seven students had referrals in CTE courses only, 47 students had referrals in core classes only, and nine students got referrals in the other category only. See Figure 4.

### **Referral Types**

The types of discipline referrals in core and Career and Technical Education class were similar. The increased frequency of discipline referrals was reflected in core classes. Of the various discipline referrals, class disruption was the most prevalent in both types of classes but extremely prevalent in core classes, as shown in Figure 5. Core teachers

wrote 90 referrals for disruption and CTE teachers wrote 26 referrals for disruption. Disruption was any physical or verbal action that disrupts, interrupts, or interferes with the education of children. Common disruptions at the middle school level were disrespectful behavior and insubordination.



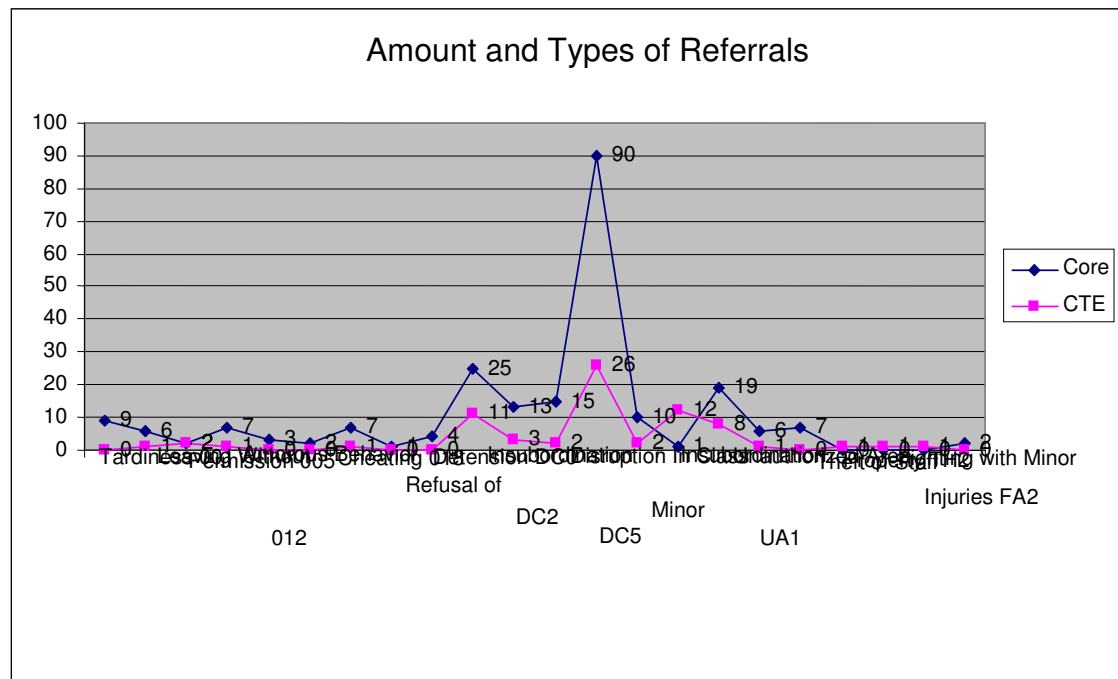
Referral Types for the 111 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students with Referrals

*Figure 4.* Summary of Referrals by Teacher Type

### Teacher Types

The third quarter preexisting discipline data reports for eighth grade students during the 2007-2008 school year were analyzed by referral types, referral frequency, and number of discipline referrals written by two groups of teachers. Eighteen academic teachers and four Career and Technical Education teachers wrote referrals. Referrals written by academic and Career and Technical Education teachers totaled 247; 230 were written by academic teachers and 17 by Career and Technical Education teachers. A two-

tailed t-test was performed to determine statistical difference in the amount of eighth grade behavior referrals. See Table 1.



Amount and Types of Referrals

Figure 5. Referral Type and Number of Offences Filed By Core CTE Teachers

The average number of referrals written by academic teachers was 12.77, while the average referrals written by Career and Technical Education teachers were 4.25. With a degree of freedom of 20 at the .05 level of significant the critical t-value is 2.086. With a degree of freedom of 20 at the .01 level of significant the critical t-value is 2.845. In a sample size of 22 teachers the t-value is 1.56.

Upon completion of the research a chi-square test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in disruption referrals written by CTE teachers and core teachers. Research showed that CTE teachers wrote 73 referrals and 26 of those referrals were for disruption. Core teachers wrote 140 referrals and 90 referrals for disruptive



behavior. Chi-square resulted in a .28960 value not meeting the  $p > .05$  value of 3.84. See Appendix B for the analysis.

Table 1.

*Two-Tailed T-Test*

**18 Core Teachers  
230 Referrals**

**4 Career and Technical Education  
Teachers  
17 Referrals**

<b>M1=12.77</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Ed1 squared</b>		<b>M2=4.25</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>Ed2 squared</b>
10	-2.77	7.67		1	-3.25	10.56
3	-9.77	95.45		1	-.325	10.56
16	3.23	10.43		3	-1.25	1.56
2	-10.77	115.99		12	7.75	60.06
21	8.23	67.73				
7	-5.77	33.29				
16	3.23	10.43				
2	-10.77	115.99				
27	14.23	202.49				
11	-1.77	3.13				
31	18.23	332.33				
1	-11.77	138.53				
19	6.23	38.81				
3	-9.77	95.45				
5	-7.77	60.37				
13	.23	.05				
7	-5.77	33.29				
36	23.23	539.63				
Total = 230		1901.06		Total = 17		82.74

Table 1. Continued *Two-Tailed T-Test*

<b>Number of Teachers</b>	<b>Number of referrals</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Critical t-value at .05</b>	<b>Critical t-value at .01</b>	<b>t-value</b>
<b>18 Core</b>	230	12.77			
<b>4 Career and Technical Education</b>	17	4.25			
			2.086	2.845	1.56

### **Summary**

In this chapter the researcher collected, sorted, tabulated, and reported eighth grade referral information for the first three quarters of the 2007-2008 school year at Plaza Middle School. Data were processed using a one-tailed t-test and a chi-square test. Discipline referral data from academic and Career and Technical Education teachers were analyzed to determine the number of referrals written by the teachers, the type of discipline violations and the frequency of violations. The numbers were used in a two-tail t-test to determine the statistical difference in the amount of referrals written by the two types of teachers. The chi-square test was used to determine if there is a significant difference in the frequency of behavior referrals in CTE classes as compared to core classes. Chapter V will analyze the findings, provide a conclusion, and make recommendations based on the results of the study for future use.

## **Chapter V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The problem of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between discipline referrals in Career and Technical Education as compared to academic classes for determining factors that could be used to reduce referrals in eighth grade. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize previous chapters, draw conclusions, and make recommendations based on the results of the data collected.

#### **Summary**

This research was conducted in response to teachers, administrators, parents and even students who were overwhelmed with disruptions in the classroom. The review of literature identified laws that impact discipline cited possible causes of classroom disruption, listed different types of disruption and discussed ways to prevent discipline disruptions in the class. Specific to the research problem was the identification of traditional academic and non-traditional competency- based class structure in education. The purpose of this research was to find out if Career and Technical Education classes impact referral reductions.

The problem of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between discipline referrals in Career and Technical Education as compared to core classes for determining factors that could be used to reduce referrals in eighth grade. To answer this problem, the following goals were utilized:

1. Determine the number of referrals written by Career and Technical Education and academic teachers.

2. Determine if Career and Technical Education classes provided environments and instructional strategies which reduced discipline referrals.

The population of this study was confined to the 2007-2008 eighth grade student population of 275 at Plaza Middle School in Virginia Beach, Virginia. This research was conducted by reviewing Plaza Middle School's discipline data-base which resulted in an office referral. Data were analyzed according to classes in which referrals were written, types of referrals and number of referrals. Upon completion of the research a t-test and a chi-square test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference in the amount and type of discipline infractions in academic classes as compared to Career and Technical Education classes that resulted in a referral.

### **Conclusions**

The problem of this study was to determine if Career and Technical Education Classes or academic classes had an impact on discipline referrals for the purpose of reducing referrals among the eighth grade student population at Plaza Middle School. To guide this research the following goals were established and compared to the research.

Goal 1. Determine the number of referrals written by Career and Technical Education and academic teachers. Based on calculated results from the two-tailed t-test with a combined sample size of 22 and a degree of freedom of 20, the critical t-value was 1.56. The t-value would be significant at  $p > .05$  of 2.086 or  $p > .01$  of 2.845. Since the obtained t-ratio of 1.56 did not meet 2.086, the observed difference between the means, the researcher can assume that the observed difference between the means was not significant. Therefore the number of referrals written by Career and Technical Education

and academic teachers bear no insight into disruptive classroom behavior resulting in referrals.

Goal 2. Determine if Career and Technical Education classes provide environments and instructional strategies which reduce discipline referrals. Based on calculations undertaken during research analysis a chi-square test was performed. The chi-square value was .28960, not meeting the  $p > .05$  value of 3.84, thus showing no significant correlation existed between classroom environment, instructional strategies and behavior referrals in CTE or core classes. Research also concluded that it was impossible to determine which classes, Career and Technical Education or core, provided the environment or instructional strategies conducive to reducing discipline referrals.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the results of this study the following recommendations should be considered when studying discipline referrals by way of specific class types:

- This study should be repeated adding a teacher orientated Likert Scale strategy to be analyzed along with the discipline data-base. The purpose of a survey would be to determine what teaching strategies were used in class and if any specific strategy influenced class disruption. Strategies which prove to reduce discipline referrals and increase student learning could be implemented in all educational classes.
- In the future researchers should analyze the actual referral copy. Referral documentation is specific and detailed which would provide the researcher with

more information to compare and contrast. The specific information could be used to alter negative classroom behavior.

- Core teachers should be observed and evaluated on use of classroom strategies, trained on hands-on strategies, then reevaluated after incorporating the hands-on strategies into their lessons to determine if student discipline referrals decrease after incorporating hands-on activities into the classroom.
- In the future student files and medical history should be included in the research for the purpose of determining if there is any correlation between students with a specific medical conditions and disruptive classroom behavior.

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## Appendix A

### Virginia Beach City Public Schools

<b>Referral For Support Services</b>	<b>Student's Name    Location    Referral Date</b>
____ To Principal    ____ To Counselor  School Name: _____  School Address: _____  School Phone: _____	_____  <b>Grade Time/Bell Referring Teacher's</b>  <b>signature</b> _____

**WISE #** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Reason (s) For Referral:</b>				<b>Action Taken By: ____ Counselor_</b>  <b>Adminstrator</b>	
____	<b>Attendance</b>	____	<b>Improper Language</b>		<b>Conference With Student</b>


## Appendix B

	<b>Discipline Referrals</b>	<b>Other Referrals</b>	
<b>CTE</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>73</b>
	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>	
<b>Core</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>230</b>
	<b>D</b>	<b>C</b>	
	<b>116</b>	<b>187</b>	

$$X^2 = \frac{303(AD-BC)^2}{(A+B)(C+D)(A+C)(B+D)}$$

$$(A+B)(C+D)(A+C)(B+D)$$

$$X^2 = \frac{303(4230-3640)^2}{(73)(230)(187)(116)}$$

$$(73)(230)(187)(116)$$

$$X^2 = \frac{303(-590)^2}{16790 \times 21692}$$

$$16790 \times 21692$$

$$X^2 = \frac{303(348100)}{364208680}$$

$$364208680$$

$$X^2 = \frac{105474300}{364208680}$$

$$364208680$$

$$X^2 = .28960$$